



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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## **SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION MONTH** ***County Environmental Health Urges Everyone to Take "Four Steps To Food Safety"***

The Department of Environmental Health, Food and Housing Division, in partnership with local agencies and industry urges everyone to follow safe food-handling practices during National Food Safety Education Month (NFSEM). This is an annual observance to focus attention on the importance of safe food handling and preparation in both home and commercial kitchens. Created by the foodservice industry in 1995, NFSEM is widely supported by federal, state, and local government agencies; the food industry; and consumer organizations.

*Four Steps To Food Safety* is this year's theme for NFSEM. Listed below are the *Four Steps To Food Safety* that can be taken to help prevent foodborne illness in the home:

- **CLEAN!** Everything that touches food should be clean. Clean hands, utensils, counter tops and cutting surfaces are important. Cleanliness is a major factor in preventing foodborne illness.
- **SEPARATE!** Fight cross-contamination! Cross-contamination is the transfer of harmful bacteria to food from other foods, cutting boards, and utensils. An example of cross-contamination is cutting raw meat, poultry, or fish on a cutting board and then slicing salad vegetables on the same cutting board without washing the cutting board between uses.
- **COOK!** Use a food thermometer in cooking. Using a food thermometer is the most reliable way to tell if food has reached a high enough temperature to destroy harmful microorganisms. Ground meats (e.g. ground beef) should be cooked to 160°F and whole poultry to 180°F.
- **CHILL!** Make sure the temperature in the refrigerator is 40°F or below and 0°F or below in the freezer. Use a refrigerator/freezer thermometer to check the temperature. Harmful bacteria grow most rapidly in the Danger Zone—the unsafe temperatures between 40°F and 140°F—so it's important to keep food out of this temperature range.

Additional information on food safety is available on the Internet at <http://www.foodsafety.gov> and at <http://www.fightbac.org>.

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